

Clifton Preservation District Cultural Landscape Guidelines - Introduction

May 3, 2004 DRAFT

INTEGRITY STANDARDS

Evaluation of Historic and Architectural Integrity

Evaluation of the architectural character and integrity for buildings, structures and sites in the Clifton neighborhood are based on the overall natural and historical character of the district. The basis for decision-making with regards to historic and architectural integrity are based on the National Register of Historic Places integrity standards which include:

- Location
- Design
- Setting
- Materials
- Workmanship
- Feeling
- Association.

Each building's and sites's contribution to the district must be evaluated in relation to the relevant context and integrity standards for the larger district. The following integrity guidelines establish which factors are most important in showing the district's and individual property's importance to the cultural landscape. They should be used as the basis for decision-making with regard to future renovation and restoration projects (including Investment Tax Credit Rehabilitation projects) or for other federally funded renovation or rehabilitation projects that impact historic resources. General Historic Preservation District Site Guidelines should be considered as well.

Clifton's cultural landscape is articulated in the *2000-2010 Clifton Neighborhood Plan* and reflected in the following vision statement from that plan:

"Clifton is a traditional neighborhood with a unique natural environment and history. The neighborhood cares about furthering sustainable economic development and viability. Underlying this vision are the values of fairness, compassion, respect, and personal responsibility. In developing this plan, the purpose is to address concerns and issues on: historic preservation, affordable housing, environmental integrity, development of social capital, public transportation, and pedestrian and bicycle amenities in a neighborhood that is safe, diverse, welcoming, and attractive."

Cultural Values

The cultural values expressed in this vision statement are firmly grounded in the early development of Clifton and carry through to the current cultural landscape. From the beginning, the **historic ethnographic landscape** of Clifton reflected diversity in:

- **Income**, evidenced by a mix of socioeconomic groups, including a solid base of working class neighborhoods, which also lent to the variety of architectural styles of buildings.
- The **human physical condition**, evidenced by one of the largest populations in the U.S. of visually impaired residents drawn by the Kentucky School for the Blind (circa 1853) and American Printing House for the Blind (circa 1858).
- **Race**, evidenced by African-American enclaves in the Jane St. area, Beargrass Baptist Church, and the former Colored Department of the Kentucky School for the Blind.
- **Faiths**, evidenced by the numerous churches and faith-based institutions including St. Frances of Rome Catholic Church, German Evangelical/Clifton Unitarian Church, Beargrass Baptist Church, Third Lutheran Church, James Lees Memorial Presbyterian Church, Clifton Baptist Church, Clifton Christian Church, and the Salvation Army.
- **Natural resources**, as evidenced by quarries which yielded stone used in buildings, walls, and curbs throughout the district and City of Louisville. Cliffs now frame many of the former quarry areas. Steep ravines, sinkholes, and wooded areas are also natural features of the district, as are springs that fed natural ponds and swales.

In establishing cultural landscape standards for buildings, structures, sites and objects in the Clifton Local Preservation District, a strong emphasis must be placed on the historic and cultural evolution of the neighborhood and how it represents the broad patterns of Clifton's past within the context of community planning and development over the years. Because site considerations have historically played such a pivotal role in how Clifton evolved, special emphasis is given to the area's natural and man made site features that are reflected in the area's distinct topography and terrain.

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC SITE FEATURES

NATURAL SITE FEATURES

There are several natural features of note which contribute to Clifton's sense of time and place: natural rock formations, gullies, ravines, cliffs and earth berms, and open farmland. One of the Clifton neighborhood's most character-defining features is its unusual topography. The terrain ranges from sheer cliffs to the south (at the Interstate 64 Expressway cut-through), to deep ravines and sinkholes (the site of Angora Heights, the Sacred Heart Home site, Billy Goat Hill and Fritz Whalen's goat farm), to gently rolling hills (Albany Street), steep inclines (Saunders Avenue), and substantial earth berms (Payne Street). These natural features affected how nineteenth century builders and land subdividers approached construction on a given plot of land. Since land reconfiguration was impractical for real estate speculators during the period of significance they made the most of these naturally occurring features by working around them.

Principal: Building placement in the Clifton Neighborhood is given a high priority when evaluating integrity because it conveys the required historic associations.

Retention of natural terrain is encouraged because it contributes to establishing a sense of Clifton's very early agricultural character.

MAN MADE SITE FEATURES

Man made features contribute to Clifton's sense of time and place as well.

Contributing man made features include: quarries; toll roads and roadways; brick streets and sidewalks; limestone curbs; iron fences and stone walls; the Chicken Steps; public parks; and unique sidewalk amenities including a horse watering trough and a the hitching post.

Quarries

As mentioned previously there were several quarries in the Clifton vicinity. One of the most notable was the Henry Bickle Quarry on the site of present day Crescent Springs Condominiums. None of the quarries active in the late 1800s and early 1900s are currently used for their original purpose. While the quarry walls are still visible, many of the larger quarry tracts have been in-filled with housing complexes, new industries, or commercial developments.

Principal: Quarry walls, in as much as they contribute to Clifton's historic past, should be retained to reflect past industrial activities of the area.

Transportation Infrastructure

Clifton is home to five major transportation routes or structures. All have a roughly east/west orientation: The old Louisville and Shelbyville Turnpike road (now Frankfort Avenue); Brownsboro Road, another nineteenth century turnpike; Payne Street, historically the least traveled of these east/west arteries. It has always been primarily residential in character; the Louisville and Frankfort Railroad line, now owned by CSX; and Interstate 64, a mid-twentieth century expressway. Secondary streets intersect all of

these major thoroughfares except I-64 in a pattern roughly reflecting a grid. However, in a number of instances, secondary streets are cut off by man-made barriers such as the railroad tracks of the CSX line which are above grade in some parts or by natural barriers such as gullies, ravines, cliffs and the like.

Streets, Sidewalks, Fences, Walls and Stairs

Adding to the patina of the Clifton neighborhood is a variety of textures related to street and sidewalk improvements and land ownership. These include brick streets and sidewalks, limestone curbs, iron fences and stone walls, and the Chicken Steps.

As the tiny enclave of Clifton was subdivided and developed, and later came under municipal jurisdiction through annexations, the City of Louisville made infrastructure improvements that included unpaved roadways being replaced by brick streets and alleys and the installation of limestone curbs that were added to defined the edges of these brick streets and alleys roadways.

Property owners, in an attempt to enhance the appearance of their property and to visually define public from private spaces installed iron fences and stone walls around the perimeter of their property. Materials used reflect not only the abundance of iron and stone in the Louisville area, but the taste and financial status of the individual property owners. Original wooden fences from the late nineteenth century have long since disappeared or been replaced while many of the more durable (and expensive) iron and stone fences are still visible in Clifton to this day.

The “Chicken Steps” located on the hillside north of Vernon Avenue, are concrete steps that serve as a sidewalk extension constructed to enable pedestrians, many visually impaired, to more easily traverse the steep hillside from Vernon Avenue down toward Brownsboro Road. The name “Chicken Steps” likely came about from the days when area residents raised chickens, some of which chose this hilltop site upon which to roost. The date of installation of the steps is not known, nor is the original construction material. The steps as they stand today are constructed of formed concrete and are maintained by Louisville Metro government.

Principal: care should be taken to retain historic site improvements such as brick streets and sidewalks, limestone curbs, iron fences and stone walls, and the Chicken Steps.

Parks

Clifton is home to two municipal parks: Clifton Park and Bingham Park. Clifton Park, a one-acre park at Arlington Avenue and Charleton Street, was created in the late 1960s by a remnant of land left over from land acquisition for the construction of Interstate 64 (the interstate was formally dedicated in 1970). It is a rectangularly-shaped, relatively flat vest pocket park with fixed playground equipment and passive recreational space. The famed Olmsted Brothers landscape firm designed Bingham Park in 1915 with money donated by the Robert Worth Bingham family. It is located at Brownsboro Road and

Coral Avenue and comprises four acres of land. Triangular in shape, with steep hills on two of its three sides, it likely was deemed suitable only for parkland because it was subject to episodic flooding and rainwater washes. It too has fixed playground equipment and passive recreational space. Both parks are under the jurisdiction of the Louisville Metro Parks Department.

Principal: proposed changes to land contour, landscaping, placement of recreation equipment, or construction or alterations to structures should be coordinated with the Louisville Metro Parks Department and the Landmarks Commission. Additionally, the Olmsted Conservancy and the Friends of Olmsted Parks should be consulted if any changes are proposed to Bingham Park.

Archaeological Potential

Structures are related to their surrounding environment. Archeology provides insights into an environment's past uses, and occupants that are often unobtainable through other forms of research. Investigations may involve survey, excavation, incidental discovery and/or monitoring of activities taking place at a site. Archeology can be an effective tool in revealing information on the location of demolished buildings, privies, wells, cisterns, foundations, walkways, fences, and trash pits. It can be a valuable tool in the research of the suggested areas of future study, and provide additional direct knowledge into the transitional periods of Clifton's development.

Principal: Archaeological remains should be considered in any development involving earth disturbance. If, in the course of work, it becomes evident that the site might reveal archaeological information, it is recommended that work cease and the appropriate Landmarks staff be notified (please refer to the Clifton Archeological Guidelines for more detail).

OBJECTS

Street objects reflecting the pre-automobile, horse and buggy era are rare objects citywide. The Clifton neighborhood has two such artifacts: a horse watering trough at 2036 Frankfort Avenue and a horse hitching post at 2212 Payne Street. The watering trough, a simple iron post topped by a round iron water basin embedded in the sidewalk, was strategically located in front of Liebert's Clifton Market, a mercantile store and saloon. Here a horse could quench his thirst outside after a long journey, while his rider could quench his thirst inside the saloon. The horse hitching post, consisting of a simple iron post embedded in the sidewalk and topped by a ring, was used to tie up horses.

Principal: both the horse-watering trough and the hitching post are rare and irreplaceable treasures of the late nineteenth century and should be retained.

BUILDINGS

Building Design:

Evaluation of the individual architectural characteristics of each building in the district is most effectively conveyed by the following basic design elements: overall scale and massing; street setback; orientation to the street conveyed by building placement, and rhythm; and texture and the relationships of solids and voids to the overall appearance of building in the district.

Building Location and Setting:

It is preferable that each building in the district be sited in its original location and be an intact building unit as originally constructed (i.e.: no major demolition of all or part of the front or rear facades) in as much as this aids in establishing the context and boundaries for the district. However, retention of the building or structure on the original location, while preferable is not mandatory. Those wishing to move an historic building should consult with the Landmarks Commission and other appropriate local and state historic preservation professionals well in advance of any anticipated move in order to ensure National Register eligibility after the move has taken place.